



OVERVIEW

In Ontario, the Ministry of Education is responsible for child care, child and family programs and kindergarten. The Early Years and Child Care Division is responsible for child care and child and family programs, while kindergarten is under the Student Achievement Division.

Ontario provides full school day junior and senior kindergarten to all children aged four and five years. Attendance in kindergarten programs is not compulsory but all children are entitled to attend. It is delivered by publicly funded “public”, Catholic, English, and French schools and by privately funded independent schools.

School boards are required to offer before and after school programs for children aged 4 – 12 years where there is sufficient demand and viability as defined by the school board and Municipal Service System Managers. School boards can choose to deliver before and after school programs directly or enter into an agreement with a licensed child care provider or an authorized recreational and skill building program provider.

Regulated child care programs (referred to as “licensed” child care in Ontario) include child care centres that offer full day, part day (nursery schools), extended hours, before and after school programs and home (family) child care. Licensed home child care, previously called “private home day care”, is delivered by providers contracted with licensed home child care agencies.

Licensed child care is delivered by a mixture of non-profit, for-profit, and publicly operated programs with non-profit service providers predominating. Publicly operated programs may be delivered by municipal/regional entities, First Nations, and publicly funded school boards.

Ontario regulates and funds child care on First Nation reserves. The province provides funding to First Nations and three transfer payment agencies to support 75 licensed child care centres and other child and family programs in First Nation communities on reserve.

The provincial government sets overall policy, legislation, and regulations for child care. It licenses child care centres and home child care agencies, conducts inspections and investigates complaints about licensed and unlicensed child care.

Ontario is the sole province in which municipal level governments have a mandated role in child care. The provincial government transfers child care funds to 47 service system managers known as Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs), which are required to engage in service planning, for capital and general operating expenses, fee subsidies, special needs resourcing, and wage enhancement grants. These local service managers have considerable discretion about how child care funds are allocated within provincial policy.

In September 2017, the province extended the requirement for providing before and after school programming for children aged 6 – 12 years to all publicly funded elementary schools for children up to Grade 6 where there was sufficient demand. Previously, when full day kindergarten was introduced in 2010, this requirement was set out for children aged 4 – 5 years old.

In addition to licensed child care centres and programs operated by school boards, new regulations allow authorized (not licensed) recreation and skill building programs for children aged 4 – 12 years to be eligible as service providers, provided they meet certain requirements. Effective in the summer of 2019, the age for provision by authorized recreation programs was changed from 6 – 12 years to 4 – 12 years. [Regulation](#) from 2011 had stipulated that third party programs (licensed child care centres or authorized recreational or skill building programs) must be operated by a not-for-profit organization or a municipality. This stipulation was subsequently removed effective September 2019.

Child and family programs intended to promote early learning, support parents and caregivers, and provide referrals to specialized services are often called family resource programs. In Ontario, these programs are referred to as EarlyON Child and Family Centres. The Ministry of Education provides funding to CMSMs and DSSABs who are responsible for the local management of EarlyON centres as part of their responsibility for the management of child care and other human services. The ministry also funds First Nations for child and family programs on reserve.

[The Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#) came into effect on August 31, 2015, replacing the *Day Nurseries Act*. Changes in accompanying regulations were made to funding, licensing, monitoring, and health and safety rules in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019. In addition, [How does learning happen? Ontario's pedagogy for the early years](#) was named the provincial document to guide programming and pedagogy in licensed child care through a Minister's Policy Statement in June 2015. Additional regulations were put in place to support implementation of the provincial framework.

In 2016, Ontario banned waiting list fees. Thus, child care operators in Ontario are not allowed to charge parents a fee or demand a deposit to put a child on a waiting list.

In June 2017, Ontario entered into [the Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement](#) with the Government of Canada to receive funds (\$146 million in each of the next three fiscal years) to be spent under the terms set out in the agreement.

Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses (CARE) Credit, a new refundable child care tax credit, was included in the 2019 provincial budget. The tax credit may reimburse parents for use of regulated or unregulated child care. It is intended to provide families with low and moderate incomes up to \$6,000 per child under the age of seven; up to \$3,750 per child between the ages of 7 – 16 years, and up to \$8,250 per child with a severe disability. The Ontario government's [Financial Accountability Office reviewed](#) the tax credit and its implications for Ontario's labour force.

On July 7, 2020, the Minister of Education announced the start of a five year CCEYA review. The Minister encouraged families, educators, staff and organizations to share their views through two online surveys available on the government's website. In October 2020, proposals for [regulatory changes](#) to age groupings, staff: child ratios and group sizes, staff qualifications and other changes were posted for consideration. The closing date for public consultation was November 20, 2020. It is foreseen that these proposed changes would come into effect on a date to be determined. It is anticipated that the effective date would be no earlier than January 1, 2021, with most changes having an anticipated effective date of July 1, 2021 if approved.

PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

Please note that some of the following figures are rounded, while totals are based on exact figures and may therefore not equal the sum of the rounded figures shown here.

Number of children 0 – 12 (2019 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0	125,800
1	134,700
2	137,900
3	150,900
4	139,100
5	149,900
6	157,700
7	151,000
8	158,800
9	157,300
10	167,600
11	164,700
12	150,500
Total	1,945,900

Number of children 0 – 12 years (aggregated) (2019 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0 – 2	398,400
3 – 5	439,900
6 – 12	1,107,600
Total	1,945,900

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (2019 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0	77,200
1	80,900
2	86,300
3	93,100
4	88,900
5	92,900
6	105,100
7	98,200
8	104,400
9	104,200
10	119,600
11	115,900
12	101,200
Total	1,267,900

Number of children 0 – 12 with employed mothers (aggregated) (2019 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0 – 2	244,400
3 – 5	274,900
6 – 12	748,600
Total	1,267,900

Number of children 0 – 14 identifying with an Indigenous group (2016)

Age	First Nations	Métis	Inuk (Inuit)	Multiple	Other
0 – 4	19,930	7,250	370	440	480
5 – 9	21,620	7,955	410	560	575
10 – 14	20,040	8,570	385	460	500
Total	61,590	23,775	1,165	1,465	1,555

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2019 rounded estimate)

Age of youngest child	Number of mothers	Participation rate (%)
0 – 2	252,500	70.1
3 – 5	201,900	74.9
0 – 5	454,400	72.2
6 – 15	606,100	82.8

Living arrangements of age of child by age by number of parents (2016)

Age	Living with two parents	Living with one parent	Lone mother	Lone father
0 – 4	582,140	107,025	92,890	14,130
5 – 9	599,155	147,375	123,695	23,680
10 – 14	578,265	164,975	136,190	28,790

Languages spoken most often at home (2016)

Age	English	French	Non-official	Multiple
0 – 4	544,390	15,695	94,035	42,385
5 – 9	610,615	18,100	72,045	54,760
10 – 14	618,455	16,135	65,435	53,685
Total	1,773,465	49,935	231,515	150,825

Median after tax income among families with children aged 0 – 5 years (2015) (\$)

Two parent families	Lone parent families	Male lone parent families	Female lone parent families
81,566	29,646	30,615	29,540

PARENTAL LEAVE AND BENEFITS

Maternity leave (Termed pregnancy leave in Ontario)

Up to 17 weeks. Pregnant employees who have started employment at least 13 weeks before the expected due date are eligible for pregnancy leave.

Parental leave

As of December 3, 2017, both new parents have the right to take unpaid parental leave time off work. Employees who take pregnancy leave are entitled to take up to 61 weeks of parental leave. All other new parents, including adoptive parents, are also entitled to take up to 63 weeks of parental leave. Employees may decide to take a shorter leave if they wish. During this time, employees retain their right to keep their benefit plans and parental/pregnancy leave count towards length of employment, length of service and seniority.

Leaves may be taken by both parents consecutively. An employee who has been employed by their employer for at least 13 weeks and who is the parent of a child is entitled to a leave of absence following the birth of the child or the coming of the child into the employee's custody, care and control for the first time.

Benefits

Maternity and parental leave provisions in Canada outside Quebec, are divided between federal and provincial/territorial governments. Benefits are paid by the federal government under the Employment Insurance program (EI), while provincial/territorial provisions for job protected leave are established in each jurisdiction's employment standards legislation. The federal benefit covers 15 weeks of maternity leave for eligible employees who are birth mothers, up to 12 weeks prior to the expected date of birth, and up to 17 weeks following the date of birth.

There are two federal benefit options for parental leave: the Standard Parental Benefit and the Extended Parental Benefit. The Standard Parental Benefit covers 35 weeks of paid leave taken over a 12 month period, paid at 55% of average weekly insurable earnings, up to \$573/week (2020) for either eligible parent, including adoptive parents. The Extended Parental Benefit allows 61 weeks of parental leave benefits taken over an 18 month period paid at 33% of average weekly earnings up to \$344/week (2020) for either eligible parent including adoptive parents.

The Parental Sharing Benefit is available to non birth (second) parents. It covers an additional five weeks of benefits if both parents have shared the Standard Benefit option (40 weeks total) or an additional eight weeks of benefits under the Extended option if both parents have shared the Extended Benefit option (69 weeks total). It is paid at either the Standard or the Extended rate.

Note: For further details about the EI federal benefit, Quebec benefit and leave provisions, and all provincial/territorial provisions for job-protected leave, see the PARENTAL LEAVE AND BENEFITS section of this publication.

KINDERGARTEN

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR KINDERGARTEN

Ministry of Education
Student Achievement Division
14th Floor, 315 Front Street West, Toronto, ON M7A 0B8
Telephone: 416-325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514
Website: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/>

LEGISLATION

Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2
O. Reg 132/12: [Class Size](#) (Current to September 2020)
O. Reg 224/10: [Full Day Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten](#) (Current to June 30, 2017)

KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENT

	JK	SK
English language	120,275	125,510
French language	8,884	9,026
Total English and French	129,159	134,536

Source: As reported by schools through the Ontario School Information System, preliminary 2018-2019.

Note: These data include full day programs in publicly funded public and Roman Catholic schools. Excludes private schools, which are not publicly funded in Ontario.

AGE ELIGIBILITY

Junior kindergarten: four years by December 31 (three years eight months in September).

Senior kindergarten: five years by December 31 (four years eight months in September).

COMPULSORY

Attendance is not compulsory, but every child is entitled to a kindergarten space. However, most children aged four and five years attend full day junior and senior kindergarten.

HOURS

The full length of the instructional program of each school day is not less than five hours a day excluding recesses. Every school year includes a minimum of 194 school days.

CLASS SIZE

As of 2018-2019, kindergarten classes may have 29 students. However, up to 10% of kindergarten classes may have up to 32 students if one of the following exceptions applies:

- if purpose built accommodation is not available (this exception will sunset after 2021-2022);
- if a program will be negatively affected (e.g., French Immersion); or
- where compliance will increase the number of kindergarten/Grade 1 combined classes.

Additionally, the board wide class size average for kindergarten must not exceed 26.

TEACHER QUALIFICATION

Full day kindergarten classrooms (with 16 or more students) are staffed by an educator team of two: a certified teacher registered with the Ontario College of Teachers (or other provincial/territorial certifying body) and a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE). Classes fewer than 16 students are not required to have an RECE, provided the class meets the conditions outlined in [O Reg 224/10](#).

A kindergarten teacher must have a teaching certificate that requires an undergraduate degree and two years of teacher education with primary/junior specialization, and be registered with the Ontario College of Teachers. Specific training in early childhood education is not required for a kindergarten teacher.

RECEs are required to have a two year diploma in early childhood education and to be registered and in good standing with the provincial College of Early Childhood Educators.

There are exceptions to these qualification requirements, such as where a teacher or early childhood educator has a letter of permission or where an early childhood educator is appointed in an urgent situation.

Note: See STAFF QUALIFICATION section for more information about RECE classification.

CURRICULUM

The [Kindergarten Program](#) was released in 2016 and an [addendum to the Kindergarten Program](#) in 2019. The addendum included changes to include new learning on concussions and online safety.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Ministry of Education provides funding to school boards to address the special education needs of all students, including those in kindergarten. The ministry allocates this funding through the Special Education Grant, which supports students with special education needs by accounting for the additional or incremental costs of the programs, services or equipment they may require.

The [Education Act](#) mandates all school boards to provide special education programs and/or services for students with special education needs. While the Ministry of Education is responsible for setting the special education funding policy that directs allocation of funds to school boards, it is up to school boards to allocate resources for each school or program, according to local needs. Flexibility in resource allocation, including determining class sizes that meet board-wide average requirements, remains with the school boards because they are in the best position to determine local needs when setting budget priorities.

SPENDING ON KINDERGARTEN

K-12 projected average per pupil spending is \$12,246 (2019-2020).

REGULATED CHILD CARE

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE

Ministry of Education
Early Years and Child Care Division
11th Floor, 315 Front Street West,
Toronto, ON M7A 0B8
Telephone: 416-325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514
Website: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/>

LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA), 2014, S.O. 2014, c. 11, Sched. 1

O. Reg. 137/2015: [General](#) (Current to August 5, 2020)

O. Reg. 138/2015: [Funding, Cost Sharing and Financial Assistance](#) (Current to September 1, 2019)

CHILD CARE SERVICES

UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

Unregulated child care arrangements, termed “unlicensed child care” by the Ontario government, are not inspected unless a complaint is made or where the ministry has reasonable grounds to suspect that care is being provided.

There are no stipulations regarding where it is provided, so it may or may not be in a provider’s home or home type residence. However, an unlicensed provider may not operate in more than one premise.

The *Child Care and Early Years Act* (CCEYA) includes provisions for compliance orders, protection orders, administrative penalties, and prosecution of offences vis-à-vis unlicensed child care. Unlicensed child care providers must inform families, in writing or electronically, that the provider is unlicensed. The provider must keep proof of this disclosure for three years, and the disclosure must say: “This child care program is not licensed by the Government of Ontario.” If an inspection or investigation is conducted, ministry staff verify compliance with the requirements.

An unlicensed child care provider can care for a maximum of five children under the age of 13. As of July 1, 2019, providers can care for no more than three children under the age of two at any one time. All the provider’s own children under the age of four years who are on the premises are included in the total number of children.

REGULATED CHILD CARE

Regulated child care is termed “licensed child care”. Under the CCEYA, “licensed child care” means child care that:

- is provided at a child care centre;
- is home child care; or
- is an in home service.

Child care centres

Licensed child care centres include full day, part day (e.g. nursery school), extended hours, and before and after school programs for children four to twelve years old. Child care centres operate in a variety of locations including schools, community centres, places of worship, workplaces, or commercial spaces such as store fronts and purpose built facilities.

Licensed home child care

Licensed home child care was previously referred to as “private home day care” in provincial legislation. Licensed home child care providers are not licensed individually but are contracted and monitored by licensed home child care agencies.

Licensed home child care providers can care for a maximum of six children under the age of 13. A home child care provider may care for no more than three children under the age of two, unless otherwise approved by a ministry director. Providers must include their own children under the age of four.

Home child care agencies must ensure that all providers’ premises, including the outdoor play space, is inspected by a home child care visitor employed by the home child care licensing agency prior to the placement of a child and quarterly thereafter to ensure compliance with the CCEYA and the regulations.

Note: The “three children under the age of two” was previously “two under the age of two”. The change was made as a statutory amendment to the Child Care and Early Years, 2014 Act (CCEYA) included in Restoring Ontario’s Competitiveness Act, 2019. It came into force July 1, 2019.

In home services

An in home service refers to child care provided under the aegis of a home child care agency for a child at her/his home, or at another place where residential care is provided for the child, and:

- there is an agreement between a home child care agency and the child care provider that ensures the agency’s oversight of the provision of care;

- the home child care agency has been advised of all the children on the premises; and
- the child care meets any other criteria prescribed by the regulations.

Financial assistance may be provided for in home services under the CCEYA, including fee subsidies and special needs resourcing.

Note: The CCEYA defines “child” as a person who is younger than 13 years old. However, children with special needs who are in receipt of a service or received financial assistance before August 31, 2017 will be eligible to continue to receive assistance until they reach 18 years of age, provided that they meet other eligibility criteria that are unrelated to age (see Ontario Regulation 138/15).

Before and after school programs for children in kindergarten to Grade 6

Under the *Education Act* and Ontario Regulation 221/11, school boards are required to offer before and after school programs for every elementary school serving students 4 – 12 years old (kindergarten to Grade 6) where there is sufficient demand from parents and families, and viability for the school boards and municipalities to offer those programs.

School boards may operate programs directly or enter into an agreement with a third party provider — either a licensed child care centre, or an authorized recreational and skill building provider for after school programs, for students ranging from kindergarten to Grade 6. Authorized recreation and skill building programs are permitted to operate once a day for up to three consecutive hours (e.g. after school).

As of August 2019, third party programs (licensed child care centres or authorized recreational and skill building programs) do not need to be operated by a non-profit organization or a municipality. There is now no limit or restriction on for-profit operators.

Before and after school programs are funded through parent fees, which are not regulated by the government. Fees at licensed child care centres or authorized recreation programs are set by the operator. Programs directly operated by a school board must be operated on a cost recovery basis.

Requirements for school boards related to programming, staff ratios, and staff qualifications are set out under [Part IX.1 of the *Education Act*; Ontario Regulation 221/11, “Extended Day and Third Party Programs”](#), and in the document [Before and After School Programs, Kindergarten–Grade 6: Policies and Guidelines for School Boards \(2019\)](#). Third party programs operated by a licensed child care provider are required to be in compliance with the CCEYA and regulations.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

[How does learning happen? Ontario’s pedagogy for the early years](#) has been Ontario’s official framework to guide programming and pedagogy in licensed child care since June 2015. Licensed child care settings are required to have a program statement consistent with the frameworks of children, foundations, and approaches. Additional regulations under the CCEYA are in place to support implementation of *How does learning happen?* in licensed child care settings. EarlyON Child and Family Centres as well as school board operated before and after school programs are also required, through guidelines, to use *How does learning happen?* to support programming.

Early learning for every child today, released in 2007 and updated in [2014](#) is an additional resource about learning and development that includes guiding principles and a continuum of development for children from birth to eight years of age. Use of *Early learning for every child today* is not a provincial requirement for licensed child care programs.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Ministry of Education provides funding to CMSMs, DSSABs and First Nations to plan, manage, and coordinate early years and child care for their surrounding region, including Special Needs Resourcing funding to support the inclusion of children with special needs in early years and child care settings. These include licensed centres, licensed home child care, in home services, EarlyON Child and Family Centres, authorized recreation programs, and camps.

Special Needs Resourcing funding is intended to:

- Hire or acquire the services of a resource teacher/consultant or supplemental staff where necessary (including salary and benefits) to support the inclusion of children with special needs;
- Provide training for staff working with children with special needs in regulated child care settings to support inclusion; and
- Purchase or lease specialized/adaptive equipment and supplies to support children with special needs.

The ministry requires CMSMs and DSSABs (municipal entities) to spend a minimum of 4.1% of their child care allocation on Special Needs Resourcing. All funding must be spent in accordance with ministry policies and guidelines. The ministry encourages service system managers to collaborate in the planning and provision of services and supports with Special Needs Resourcing service providers, licensees, parents/guardians, schools, and other partners.

Resource teachers/consultants may work with several children in multiple locations and can also provide professional learning experiences to individuals working with children with special needs in early years and licensed child care settings and approved recreation programs. The type and level of service can vary, depending on each child's needs, the local service model, and available resources.

The supports resource teachers/consultants typically provide for children with special needs and their families may include: providing child care staff with program accommodation and modification strategies and/or professional development; support for individualized support plans; developmental screens, referrals to community agencies; information and resources for parents; and obtaining specialized equipment as required.

The Ministry of Education recommends that resource teachers/consultants hold a diploma in Early Childhood Education, have additional training/experience/education related to working with children with special needs, and hold a standard first aid credential including an infant/child CPR certificate. Requirements for resource teachers/consultants directly employed by licensed child care operators are outlined in section 55 of O. Reg. 137/15 of the *CCEYA*.

Ontario Regulation 137/15 of the *CCEYA* also requires child care licensees to ensure that an up to date individualized support plan is in place for each child with additional needs who receives child care, and that the plan includes:

- a description of how the child care centre or home child care provider will support the child to function and participate in a meaningful, purposeful manner;
- a description of any supports or aids, adaptations or other modifications to the physical, social and learning environment; and
- instructions relating to the child's use of supports/aids.

The plan must be developed in consultation with the child (if appropriate for the child's age), a parent of the child with disabilities, and any regulated health care professional or other person working with the child who would be a helpful collaborator. A centre that includes children with disabilities must be structured so that the program accommodates the individualized support plan of each child and is developmentally appropriate while being inclusive of all children.

INDIGENOUS CHILD CARE

Indigenous child care on reserve

Ontario funds and regulates child care in Indigenous communities on reserve.

As of March 31, 2019, the province funded 99 First Nations and three transfer payment agencies to support on reserve child care and other early years programs. This funding is primarily targeted towards fee subsidies, Special Needs Resourcing, wage subsidy and enhancement, and child care transformation in First Nation communities.

As of March 31, 2019, First Nation communities were operating 75 licensed child care centres on reserve with a licensed capacity of 3,189 spaces. There were also two licensed home child care agencies with 31 homes providing home child care on reserve in First Nation communities.

Ontario cost shares Ontario Works regulated child care and fee subsidies with First Nations for licensed child care programs on an 80/20 basis. The province pays 100% of other child care expenses. First Nations manage the fee subsidy system in their communities.

Ontario recovers the majority of these expenditures (with the exception of Special Needs Resourcing and wage enhancement) on regular fee subsidies from the federal government under the 1965 Indian Welfare Agreement.

In addition to funding contributions under the 1965 Indian Welfare Agreement, the federal government funds two on reserve early years' programs that serve distinct community needs. These are:

- First Nation and Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI), which provides child care for parents/caregivers participating in federal employment programs (ISETS).
- Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve Program (AHSOR), which provides child development and school readiness programming in a culturally enriching context.

According to Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Annual Report 2019; the ministry established or enhanced 67 on reserve programs (five enhanced, 62 new) from March 2018 to March 2019.

Note: The on reserve licensed child care data reported above are from the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

Indigenous child care off reserve

Indigenous led early years and child care programs are available to families off reserve in a number of locations in Ontario. Examples of organizations providing culturally relevant early learning and child care programs include Friendship Centres and Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) providers. AHSUNC is a federal government program. A list of Ontario AHSUNC sites can be found [online](#).

According to Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Annual Report 2019, the Ministry of Education established or enhanced 61 programs in urban and rural communities (10 child care programs, 14 joint child care and child and family programs), and 37 EarlyON child and family programs. In addition, 27 licensed child care centres off reserve reported that they were Indigenous led organizations operating in urban and rural communities. (See also the section on INDIGENOUS ELCC in this report).

SPACE STATISTICS

Number of regulated child care spaces (2019)	
<i>Centre spaces</i>	<i>Total (full day and part day)</i>
<i>Age group</i>	<i>centre spaces</i>
Infants (< 18 months)	13,626
Toddlers (18 months – 30 months)	46,865
Preschool-age (30 months – six years)	112,042
Kindergarten (44 months – seven years)	103,308
School-age (68 months – 13 years)	170,337
Family age	418
Total centre spaces	446,596
<i>Home child care enrolment</i>	
Regulated home child care enrolment (day time)	14,257
Regulated home child care enrolment (before and/or after school)	6,082
<i>Total regulated home child care enrolment</i>	<i>20,339</i>
Total number of licensed/regulated spaces (centre and home)	466,935

Note: A breakdown between full and part day spaces was not available by age group.

Note: As of September 1, 2017, a new licensed age group – “family age” – for children 0 – 12 years was introduced for licensed child care centres. This new group allows children of different ages in the same family to be placed in the same group in a play activity room.

Note: The figure for home child care represents the estimated enrolment as of March 31, 2019, based on a survey of home child care agencies.

Note: The total number of licensed/regulated spaces includes licensed capacity (not enrolment) of centres and enrolment in home child care.

Number of children receiving services through Special Needs Resourcing funding in regulated child care (2018) 31,483

Note: This figure represents the number of children funded through Special Needs Resourcing between January 1 and December 31, 2018 (the most recent year of data available).

Children receiving fee subsidies (2018) 94,735

Note: The number of children receiving fee subsidies is the average number of children served monthly between January and December 2018. Previous ECEC in Canada reports prior to 2016 have reported this figure as the cumulative total number of children subsidized throughout the year. The average monthly figure is reported here for comparative purposes among jurisdictions and is the most recent data available.

Number of child care programs (2019)

Centre based programs

Number of child care centres located in publicly funded schools	2,990
Number of child care centres and nursery school programs not in schools	2,533

Total number of full day and part day centre based child care programs 5,523

Regulated home child care

Number of home child care agencies	124
Active homes	3,918

Note: The total includes community based and school based licensed child care centres, all age groups

Note: A home child care provider who has a contract/agreement with an agency, and may or may not have children enrolled currently, is considered active.

Sponsorship of regulated child care centre spaces (2019)

Full and part time regulated centre spaces

Publicly operated	5,508
Non-profit	347,441
For-profit	93,647
Total centre spaces	446,596

Sponsorship of regulated child care centres (2019)

<i>Program type</i>	<i>Non-profit</i>	<i>For-profit</i>	<i>Total</i>
Full day	1,964	1,029	2,992
Half day	413	173	586
Other	1,860	85	1,945
Total number of centres	4,235	1,286	5,523

Note: 530 centres were categorized as both “full day and half day centres” in the 2019 Licensed Child Care Operations Survey. These centres have been evenly distributed between full day and half day according to auspice type.

Note: The majority of “Other” centres are before and after school programs; “Other” also includes centres offering evening or overnight care.

Sponsorship of regulated home child care agencies (2019)

Municipally operated	12
Non-profit	92
For-profit	20
Total regulated home child care agencies	124

Sponsorship of approved home child care homes (2019)

Municipally operated	1,320
Non-profit	5,828
For-profit	775
Total number of approved homes	7,923

Source: [Early Years and Child Care Annual Report 2019](#) (as of March 31, 2019)

Note: Municipally operated agencies are those delivered by CMSMs and DSSABs.

Note: Spaces delivered by First Nations are included in the not-for-profit number.

PARENT FEES

Ontario does not set or regulate parent fees.

In 2017, the province began to collect fee information annually from licensed child care centres and home child care agencies; this data, which was also collected in 2015, has continued to be collected.

Based on the 2019 provincial survey, licensed child care centres and home child care agencies reported the following fees:

Licensed child care centres (2019)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Median fee/day and range</i>
Infant	\$66 (41-97)
Toddler	\$54 (37-86)
Preschool-age	\$47 (35-73)
Kindergarten-age	\$42 (24-68)
Kindergarten-age before and after school	\$25 (16-35)
School-age before and after school	\$22 (16-33)

Source: [Licensed Child Care Survey](#), Ministry of Education, 2019

Note: The reported range is the interval between the 5th and 95th percentile. Zeros were removed from the analysis. 90% of the reported daily fees in licensed child care centres and homes fall within the ranges identified in the table. As the fees are self-reported by child care centres and home child care agencies and are not verified by the Ministry of Education, using these percentiles removes fees may have been reported in error (e.g. fees presumed to be monthly or weekly rates.)

Licensed home child care agencies

Age	Home child care median fee/day and range
< 2 years	\$46 (31-55)
2 – 3 years	\$44 (30-55)
4 – 5 years	\$40 (26-48)
4 – 5 years (before and after school)	\$25 (10-36)
6 – 12 years (before and after school)	\$25 (10-35)

Source: [Licensed Child Care Survey](#), Ministry of Education, 2019

In 2019, a national survey of child care fees in Canada's large cities included the following Ontario cities.

Median monthly fees by city

City	Infant	Toddler	Preschooler
Windsor	\$868	\$760	\$662
London	\$1,250	\$1,172	\$1,055
Kitchener	\$1,389	\$1,149	\$1,020
Hamilton	\$1,148	\$977	\$825
Brampton	\$1,259	\$1,025	\$955
Mississauga	\$1,424	\$1,090	\$1,042
Oakville	\$1,503	\$1,264	\$1,210
Richmond Hill	\$1,350	\$1,280	\$1,100
Vaughan	\$1,545	\$1,285	\$1,120
Toronto	\$1,774	\$1,457	\$1,207
Markham	\$1,541	\$1,327	\$1,180
Ottawa	\$1,020	\$1,040	\$1,010

Source: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2020). *In Progress: Child care fees in Canada 2019*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Note: These median monthly figures include fees from centre based child care and home child care.

STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTRES

The *Child Care and Early Years Act*, 2014 came into effect on August 31, 2015, replacing the *Day Nurseries Act* as the legislation governing the provision of child care in Ontario. The Ministry of Education phased in implementation of new regulations.

Licensed child care centres in Ontario must meet and maintain specific provincial standards set out in Ontario Regulation 137/15 General. The standards set out in the *CCEYA* address items that affect quality in a licensed child care centres, such as staff/child ratios, physical environment, staff qualifications, and children's health and wellbeing.

[The CCEYA and its regulations current to September 2019](#)

Maximum centre size: none

Maximum staff:child ratios and group sizes

Age Group	Staff:child ratios	Max. group sizes
Infant (< 18 months)	3:10	10
Toddler (18 months – 30 months)	1:5	15
Preschool-age (30 months – 6 years)	1:8	24
Kindergarten-age (44 months – < 7 years)	1:13	26
Primary/junior school-age (68 months – 13 years)	1:15	30
Junior school-age (9 years – 13 years)	1:20	20

Requirements in child care centres for children with special needs

Age	Staff: child ratios	Max. # of children	Proportion of qualified employees
2 years – < 6 years	1:4	4	1/1
6 years – < 13 years	1:3	3	1/1

Requirements in child care centres for family age grouping

Age	Staff: child ratios
< 12 months	1:3
12 months < than 24 months	1:4
24 months < than 13 years	1:8

If a licensed toddler or preschool-age group (a) includes no more than 20% of children from a younger age category, the above requirements set out for toddlers or preschool children apply. If it (b) includes more than 20% children from a younger age category, the requirements set out for the youngest child in the group apply. In a licensed kindergarten-age group, if 25% of children are three years old or turning four that school year, the group can operate under regulations for kindergarten-age. In a licensed primary/junior group, if no more than 25% are in the kindergarten age category, the group can abide by primary/junior regulations for ratios and maximum group sizes. Finally, in a licensed junior school-age group, up to 25% of children can be between five and nine years of age and be in compliance with the regulations.

Note: The Ministry of Education may give approval for a child care centre to use mixed age grouping for any licensed age group.

Note: Family age grouping was introduced September 1, 2017.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

The College of Early Childhood Educators

[The College of Early Childhood Educators](#), was established in 2007. It is a self regulatory body that has the statutory mandate to govern and regulate the profession of early childhood education in Ontario under the a [Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice](#). The CECE is governed by the [Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007](#). Individuals with an ECE diploma or equivalent working within the scope of practice in Ontario are required to be members of the college to be qualified staff and use the designation of RECE.

Registered early childhood educator designation

In order to be registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators, a person must have successfully completed an early childhood education (ECE) diploma from an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology (OCAAT) or a [CECE approved program](#). The applicant must register with the college and renew their membership on a yearly basis. Members of the college are referred to as Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) and may use this as their professional designation.

Centre staff qualification requirements

In a licensed child care centre the minimum requirements for staff are as follows:

A *supervisor or director of a licensed child care centre* must be:

1. a member shall be a member in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) and have at least two years of experience providing licensed child care, and is approved by a ministry director; or
2. in the opinion of a director, capable of planning and directing the program of a child care centre, being in charge of children, and overseeing staff.

A *qualified staff* for any licensed age group shall be:

1. a member in good standing with the CECE, a RECE; or
2. an employee who is otherwise approved by a director.

To work with a licensed junior school-age group or a licensed primary/junior school-age group that includes only children who are junior school-age, the following are also qualified employees:

1. an employee who has a diploma or degree in child and youth care;

2. an employee who has a diploma or degree in recreation and leisure services; or
3. an employee who is a member in good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers.

Qualified staff requirements in a licensed child care centre

Age	Max. # of children	# of staff	Proportion of qualified staff
Infant	10	3	1/3
Toddler	15	3	1/3
Preschool-age	24	3	2/3
Kindergarten-age	26	2	1/2
Primary/junior school-age	30	2	1/2
Junior school-age	20	1	1/1

STAFF WAGES

Median annual employment income (\$) and median hourly wage rate (\$) for Early Childhood Educators and Assistants working in day care services full time, full year.

Median annual employment income \$35,163

Median hourly employment income \$16.91 - 19.32/hr
(calculated using 2080 hrs/year (40 hrs week) and 1280 hrs/year (35 hrs/week))

Source: Canadian Census, 2016

Note: These data include Early Childhood Educators and Assistants, as defined in NOC 4214, working in the day care services industry in centre based environments with children aged 0 – 12 years, as defined in NAICS 6244. Included as individuals who worked full-time (30+ hours/week) and full-year (48+ weeks/year), did not work at home, and were not self-employed. Included are supervisors but not managers. Employment income refers to income from all jobs if the Early Childhood Educator or Assistant holds a second job providing a wage, salary or commissions.

LICENSED (REGULATED) HOME CHILD CARE

Licensed home child care is monitored by a licensed home child care agency according to the regulations set out by the Ministry of Education under the *CCEYA*. Neither the provider nor the home is licensed but they are regulated. Employees carrying out the monitoring on behalf of the agency are referred to as home child care visitors. Their responsibilities include inspecting approved homes according to provincial regulations.

Home visitors must be registered members in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators, have a minimum two years of experience working with children, and be approved by a Ministry director. The qualification requirement may be waived if, in the opinion of the director, the home child care visitor is capable of providing support and supervision at a home child care premise.

Model of organization

Agency model

Licensing, monitoring and enforcement

A home visitor employed by the licensed agency is required to support providers and conduct unannounced quarterly visits to every home child care provider, and complete the Ministry Inspection Checklist. A home visitor must also follow up on non-compliances, serious occurrences and complaints. The agency is responsible for ensuring that provincial requirements for care are met, according to the *CCEYA*.

At least once per year, the Ministry of Education inspects licensed home child care agencies and some home child care locations to ensure the agency is in compliance with the *CCEYA* and its regulations.

There is no cap on the number of homes a home child care visitor is permitted to have in a caseload.

Home child care provider requirements

Home child care providers are not required under the *CCEYA* to have specific training or educational qualifications to provide child care for a licensed home child care agency.

Licensed home child care providers are defined as independent contractors who have an agreement with a licensed home child care agency for the agency's oversight.

In order to enter into an agreement, providers:

- must be at least 18 years old;
- cannot have been convicted of an offence under the *CCEYA*;
- cannot have been convicted of any of the prescribed offences under the Criminal Code as detailed in the *CCEYA* (e.g., sexual interference, child pornography);
- cannot have had his/her membership revoked under the *Early Childhood Educators Act*, *Ontario College of Teachers Act* or *Social Work and Social Service Work Act*;
- must have undergone health assessment and public health recommended immunizations;
- must have valid certification in standard first aid, including infant and child CPR.

The provider and anyone else normally resident in the home child care environment or regularly on the premises when children are present are required to have a Vulnerable Sector (police) Check.

MUNICIPAL ROLE

In Ontario, local government municipal entities play several key roles in child care. They are organized by the province into 47 Community Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Board (DSSABs), designated as local service system managers by the Ontario government, and are responsible for planning and managing licensed child care services at the local level. This includes developing a local service plan every five years, which is mandated by the provincial government and includes a requirement for community participation. The 47 municipal entities may directly operate child care centres and home child care agencies; this is discretionary.

The Ministry of Education allocates provincial funds to the CMSMs and DSSABs using a child care funding formula introduced in 2013, reviewed in 2019-2020. CMSMs and DSSABs determine how to use child care funding within their respective communities and within the parameters set by the provincial government.

The allocations to CMSMs and DSSABs are based on publicly available data largely drawn from Statistics Canada such as child population, Low-Income Cut-Off, cost of living indicators, Indigenous population data, French speaking populations and measures related to rural and remote communities. (See [Ontario Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guideline 2020](#)). In 2019, the funding formula was modified using 2016 census data from Statistics Canada, together with updated data from the Ontario Ministry of Finance. These updated data elements resulted in changes to CMSM and DSSAB 2019 child care allocations.

The *Ontario Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guideline 2020* outlines the funding and the accountability requirements of local service system managers.

Local service system managers are required to contribute a share of at least 20% of the funds for a portion of the child care general allocation, and are asked to contribute funding toward one other child care funding allocation (known as Expansion Plan funding).

FUNDING

TYPES OF FUNDING

Fee subsidies

In Ontario, under a provincial mandate and provincial policy, fee subsidies and other aspects of ELCC are managed by CMSMs and DSSABs.

CMSMs and DSSABs have considerable responsibility and autonomy in some areas but not others. Fee subsidy is managed and processed by CMSMs and DSSABs entirely at the municipal level, including decisions regarding social criteria for individual eligibility. However, CMSMs and DSSABs must use the income test prescribed by O. Reg. 138/15- Funding, Cost-sharing and Financial Assistance under the CCEYA, to determine eligibility for fee subsidy and the amount of the parental contribution.

Eligibility for families

Social criteria

The child's best interests should play a primary role in the decision to provide fee subsidy; parents are not required to have recognized needs themselves, such as employment, attendance at an educational/training program, or other circumstances, including medical needs. If the parent also has recognized needs, the parents' circumstances should also be taken into consideration.

- The number of hours of subsidized child care allowed is based on the time neither parent is available to care for the child because of employment, education/training or other approved activities.
- Subsidy may also be provided based on the special needs or social needs of the child, or special needs of a parent.

These policies do not apply to First Nations which may establish their own criteria.

Financial eligibility (2019) (net income)

Eligibility for a fee subsidy in Ontario is determined by a provincial income test.

- Amount of parental contribution is based on adjusted net family income (line 236 of the latest income tax Notice of Assessment) and the total actual or projected cost of child care for the family. The subsidy calculation is for all children in the family, not per child.
- Full subsidy is provided if net income is \$20,000 or less.
- For a partial subsidy, the parental contribution is 10% of income between \$20,000 and \$40,000, plus 30% of income above \$40,000. There is no fixed upper income limit.

- If the calculated parental contribution is more than the cost of child care for all children in the family, the family is not eligible for fee subsidy.
- Full subsidy is available for children of social assistance recipients (Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program) as well as for children enrolled in child care programs operated by First Nations.

Which service providers are eligible to deliver subsidized child care?

To be eligible to receive children whose fees are subsidized, child care operators must have a service contract with the CMSM or DSSAB (sometimes called a "purchase of service agreement").

Under provincial policy, fee subsidies are available in all types of licensed child care (centres and home based, public, not-for-profit and for-profit). School board operated before and after school programs, authorized recreational and skill building programs, and camps that meet criteria set out under the CCEYA and regulations are also eligible to receive children with fee subsidies unless the CMSM or DSSAB specifies otherwise.

Municipalities may set their own criteria that services must meet to receive subsidized children such as minimum quality ratings (used by a number of municipalities), meeting identified targets such as a salary scale, or having non-profit incorporation.

Surcharges above the fee subsidy

Although Ontario does not set subsidy rates, parents may have to pay additional fee charges if the CMSM or DSSAB does not allow the full actual costs of a service to be covered.

Subsidy rates

The subsidy rate is the maximum amount paid by the provincial/territorial government to the service to cover all or part of the parent fee.

Ontario does not use set subsidy rates, so this does not apply. The province permits subsidization up to the full (actual) cost of the space, as determined by CMSMs and DSSABs. However, municipalities may set maximums for services below the full cost of a space, in which case subsidized parents would have to make up the difference "out of pocket". Some CMSMs and DSSABs pay "actual costs" based on services' budgets.

Are all eligible families entitled to a fee subsidy?

Eligibility and assessment for a fee subsidy does not guarantee the parent a subsidy, as the supply of subsidies is linked both to availability of subsidy funding and the parent securing a licensed space. When determining the appropriate amount of subsidized child care that may be provided, CMSMs and DSSABs have discretion. When the demand for fee subsidies is greater than the available funds, CMSMs/DSSABs may establish wait lists. There may be long local CMSM and DSSAB waiting lists for fee subsidies.

Are there other programs that subsidize the individual family or child?

[Ontario Works](#) participants may be reimbursed for the cost of unregulated child care to support employment or participation in employment assistance activities. Ontario Works participants may only be reimbursed for unregulated child care when a licensed child care arrangement is not possible due to the participant's needs and the availability of service (e.g. need for weekend or overnight care). In 2019, the government introduced the [Ontario Child Care Tax Credit](#). This tax credit could provide about 300,000 families with up to 75% of their eligible expenses for child care in centres, home based care, camps, and other settings; the child care is not required to be regulated. Families with low and moderate incomes could receive up to \$6,000 per child under the age of seven years, or up to \$3,750 per child between 7 – 16 years; and up to \$8,250 per child with a severe disability.

Operational (previously recurring) funding

Operational funding in Ontario is encompassed by what is designated as “operating funding” to municipal entities. Operating funding for municipalities and First Nations includes funds for general operating expenses, Special Needs Resourcing, funds used for staff salaries and benefits and other operating costs. Fee subsidy funding is also part of this funding. CMSMs and DSSABs are responsible for managing child care funding within the parameters of legislation, regulations, standards, and policies established by the ministry in a way that is responsive to local needs.

Municipalities and First Nations may use a total of 10% of operating funding towards administration funding. As well, each municipality must spend 4.1% of its child care allocation on special needs resourcing funding.

As indicated in the 2020 budget allocations (October 2019), CMSMs and DSSABs are encouraged to cost share Expansion Plan funding (operating funding provided for expanded access to child care through more spaces or decreased fees), which was previously funded at 100%, at a rate of 80/20 provincial/municipal, while all administration funding, including Wage Enhancement administration funding, will be cost-shared at a rate of 50/50 as of January 2021. In addition, the threshold for allowable administration funding municipalities can spend on child care will be reduced from 10% to 5% in January 2022.

Wage Enhancement/Home Child Care Enhancement Grant

In addition to these provincial funds transferred to CMSMs and DSSABs, Ontario introduced a Wage Enhancement/Home Child Care Enhancement Grant in 2015. Under this program, which is administered by municipalities separately from operating funding, all eligible child care staff/caregivers in regulated settings may receive the wage increase of \$2/hour or \$20/day for home child care providers. All licensed child care centres and home child care agencies including those that opened in the previous year are eligible for Wage Enhancement/Home Child Care Enhancement Grant funding, including not-for-profit, for-profit, and publicly operated programs. Directors/supervisors must apply to their CMSM or DSSAB for the grant on behalf of their staff.

The Ministry of Education funds the wage enhancement grant on an annual basis as part of the annual service contracts with CMSMs and DSSABs. Wage enhancement grant funding has been allocated as part of the 2020 allocations.

Note: The wage enhancement funding does not include those RECEs working in EarlyON Child and Family Centres.

One time funding

Capital funding

The government's new child care capital strategy focuses on aligning future early years and child care capital investments to the construction of new schools. In 2019, Ontario committed up to \$1.0 billion in funding to create up to 30,000 child care capital spaces in schools over the next five years, including up to 10,000 spaces in new schools.

As of April 1, 2019, both for-profit and non-profit child care operators are now eligible to operate in schools in Ontario.

Child care operators in schools are required to have a purchase of service agreement with their local CMSM or DSSAB or be eligible to receive fee subsidy payments from the CMSM or DSSAB.

Fee Stabilization Funding

Fee Stabilization Support funding was provided in 2018. This was one time funding associated with a provincial increase in the minimum wage. It was intended to allow wages to rise to the new minimum wage while stabilizing licensed child care fees. Fee Stabilization Support funding ended as of March 31, 2019.

1 The child care fee subsidies figure is an approximate figure as the amount of fee subsidy funding provided to each CMSM/DSSAB as well as First Nations is not possible to determine due to the introduction of flexible reporting under the child care funding formula. The ministry obtained the fiscal year figure by taking 75% of CMSM/DSSAB 2018 Financial Statement entitlement and 25% of the 2019 Revised Estimates submissions (which includes both actuals and projections). Additionally, due to a number of outstanding 2018-2019 First Nations Financial Statements submissions, information from their allocations has also been used.

PROVINCIAL ALLOCATIONS FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (2018-2019)

Fee subsidies¹	\$880,435,048
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Operational (previously Recurring) funding

Operating funds ² (other than fee subsidies and Special Needs Resourcing) includes Wage enhancement and other operational funding	\$728,441,309
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Special Needs Resourcing ²	\$125,550,350
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Total Operational funding	\$853,991,659
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Capital funding

Capital for communities ³	\$94,279,586
Capital for schools ⁴	\$64,570,797
French language schools	\$1,028,507

Total capital funding	\$159,878,890
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Note: Federal funding of \$144,836,900 through the Canada – Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement for 2018-2019 is included in the provincial allocations.

TOTAL ALLOCATION	\$1,894,305,597
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Total provincial allocation for regulated child care + \$144,836,900 federal funding through the Canada - Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (2018-2019)

Other funding

Small Water Works, Territory Without Municipal Organizations, Qualifications Upgrade Program	\$7,030,799
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2 The total amount of what Ontario terms “operating funding” (funding transferred to municipalities under the provincial funding formula) includes fee subsidies. It also includes Special Needs Resourcing and funds used by municipalities as “Operational” funding, as well as Wage Enhancement funding.

3 Capital for communities are funds for CMSM/DSSAB expenditures under community based capital and Indigenous-led programs for the 2018-2019 fiscal year (Public Accounts). These include both child care and child and family (EarlyON) expenditures.

4 Capital for schools are funds for school board child care expenditures for the 2018-2019 fiscal year (Public Accounts).

